

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAJ-01 SAM-01 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-05 OMB-01 EB-07 /084 W

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R 131941Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5158

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY MADRID

USMISSION USBERLIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 29640

E.O. 11652: GDS

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TAGS: PFOR, FR

SUBJECT: GISCARD FIGARO INTERVIEW: FURTHER COMMENTS
ON DETENTE ASPECTS.

REF: PARIS 29339 (NOTAL)

1. ON FOREIGN POLICY SIDE GISCARD COVERED MOST OF WATER-FRONT IN LARGELY CONVENTIONAL TERMS EXCEPT FOR HIS DELIBERATE EMPHASIS ON IMPORTANCE GOF CONTINUES TO ATTACH, AFTER GISCARD'S MOSCOW VISIT, TO NOT HAVING MOSCOW'S DEFINITION OF DETENTE IMPOSED ON IT.

2. THE STRONG EMPHASIS ON THIS POINT SUGGESTS TO US THAT, IN WAKE WIDESPREAD PUBLICITY GIVEN TO DIFFERENCES OVER DETENTE INTERPRETATION IN MOSCOW, AS WELL AS TO OTHER ASPECTS OF THIS NOT WHOLLY SATISFYING TRIP, GISCARD FELT HIMSELF FORCED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN (A) GLOSSING OVER THESE ISSUES OR (B) TAKING FURTHER CLEAR POSITION.

3. THE LATTER COURSE, WHICH HE CHOSE, CLEARLY RUNS RISK OF CONTINUING ARGUMENT WITH MOSCOW. ON THE OTHER HAND TO GO ON AS IF DIFFERENCES OVER IDEOLOGICAL DETENTE WERE UNIMPORTANT ALSO WOULD HAVE INVOLVED OBVIOUS RISKS AND DISADVANTAGES.

4. ON FRENCH DOMESTIC FRONT IT WOULD HAVE REINFORCED CRITICAL IMAGE OF GISCARD, HELD PARTICULARLY BY GAULLIST RIGHT WING, AS WELL-INTENTIONED BUT SOMEWHAT WEAK-KNEED LEADER, BOLD WITH WORDS BUT IN FACT PREPARED TO ACCEPT TERMS SOVIETS IMPOSED ON THEIR FRENCH RELATIONSHIP.

5. IN FOREIGN POLICY CONTEXT CONTINUING RETICENCE WOULD ALSO HAVE HAD POSSIBLY SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES. PARTICULARLY AS SEEN FROM THE FRENCH PERSPECTIVE AS A MEDITERRANEAN POWER, IT MAY HAVE SEEMED ESSENTIAL TO TRY TO DISABUSE SOVIET LEADERSHIP AT THIS POINT OF THE IDEA THAT THEY CAN HAVE DETENTE IN WESTERN AND NORTHERN EUROPE, WHILE BUSILY CONTRIBUTING TO POSSIBLE POLITICAL DISINTEGRATION OF EUROPE'S SOUTH. THESE CONCERNS, WHICH IN THE LONGER RUN ALSO APPLY TO FRANCE ITSELF, MAY HAVE BEEN ALL THE MORE PRONOUNCED IN VIEW OF POSSIBILITY THAT

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BREZHNEV COULD BE SUCCEEDED BY MORE CONSERVATIVE SOVIET LEADERSHIP, WHICH COULD BE EXPECTED TO WIDEN RATHER THAN

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TO BRIDGE GAP BETWEEN THE TWO INTERPRETATIONS OF DETENTE. LASTLY IT MAY HAVE BEEN ON GISCARD'S MIND THAT EVEN TACIT WITHDRAWAL FROM THE DEBATE OVER THIS ISSUE COULD BE INTERPRETED ELSEWHERE IN EUROPE AS WRITING ON THE WALL, AND SO RESULT IN BROADER ACCEPTANCE OF MOSCOW'S TRUNCATED INTERPRETATION OF DETENTE THAN ANYONE IN WEST HAD HAD IN MIND AT HELSINKI.

6. WHATEVER THE PRECISE REASONING, GISCARD'S FIRM LINE ON THIS ISSUE IN THIS INTERVIEW PUTS SOVIETS ON NOTICE - IN SPITE OF SIMULTANEOUS POLITE DISCLAIMERS ABOUT THEIR "UNDERSTANDING" OF THESE POINTS - THAT THEY MAY NOT ULTIMATELY BE ABLE TO HAVE IT BOTH WAYS ON DETENTE - I.E., TO EXPLOIT AN INCREASINGLY PEACEFUL EUROPEAN ATMOSPHERE TO WAGE INCREASINGLY MORE EFFECTIVE IDEOLOGICAL "COMPETITION" - WITHOUT AT LEAST AN ARGUMENT FROM THE FRENCH. IN DOING SO, HOWEVER, GISCARD WAS VERY CAREFUL NOT TO BE OFFENSIVE. HE ALSO SHARPLY DOWNGRADED FRANCE'S STATED HOPES FOR EARLY CSCE IMPLEMENTATION OF HUMAN RELATIONS ISSUES.

7. WHETHER THIS STAND WILL IN FACT BE SUFFICIENT EITHER TO QUIET THE SURGING DOUBTS ABOUT THE CONSISTENCY AND SUBSTANCE OF CURRENT FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE FRENCH POLITICAL SPECTRUM SEEMS TO US DOUBTFUL; SINCE GISCARD IS NOT LIKELY TO WIN HIS ARGUMENT WITH THE SOVIETS OVER MEANING OF DETENTE; WHEREAS HIS DEFLATION OF CSCE PROSPECTS MAY STRIKE SOME AS REALISTIC BUT DISCOURAGING NEW PUBLIC CONCESSION TO APPEASE THE USSR.

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